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A place to mourn the long-ago dead

**Ceremony held for infants who died
and were buried anonymously decades ago**

BY PETTI FONG, VANCOUVER

Thousands of infants who were born dead or who died shortly after birth and were buried anonymously at Mountain View Cemetery finally have a memorial.

A ceremony was held over the

weekend for family members of the children buried in communal graves between 1914 and 1971.

For decades, the cemetery had buried the infants in anonymous graves as medical officials believed that the best way to help families deal with the grief of losing a baby

was to hurriedly bury them with little recognition.

Every few days, the hospitals would call funeral homes with more bodies to bury. Holes were dug in the cemetery. Infant-sized simple white boxes were placed inside two or three at a time and then a board was placed over the gravesite.

When there was no room for more boxes, the graves were filled in with dirt and another hole dug for

the new bodies gathered from the hospitals.

For six decades, more than 10,000 infants were buried that way, their presence in the cemetery known to only a few.

Cemetery manager Glen Hodges said the stories he heard from families over the years varied slightly in details.

"The advice used to be after a still-born or new baby had died that the hospital would take the infant

away, urge the father to take the mother on a vacation quickly and try to get her pregnant again," Mr. Hodges said.

Family members who attended the ceremony on the weekend said they needed a place to mourn for long-dead sons, daughters and siblings.

One woman who attended the ceremony over the weekend fulfilled her father's dying wish to put a marker at the cemetery to remem-

ber her brothers, who died shortly after birth.

In 2005, the cemetery engaged a landscape architecture firm to develop an appropriate way to identify, mark and commemorate the three areas where the bodies were buried and give family members a place to mourn.

Family members could not place a marker on the grave area.

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SPORTS
TIGERS'S LATE SWOON
COSTS THEM DIVISION
TITLE. S3

Stones will symbolize buried babies

CEMETERY *from page S1*

There were too many infants in one grave for the cemetery to accommodate a marker for each child.

But over the last few months, cemetery staff have completed a major landscaping of the cemetery. A dry streambed of shrubs and flowers and river stones will symbolize the babies buried there. There will be one stone for every infant in the graves.

Families can also purchase larger stones and have the name of infants engraved as part of the revamped landscape.

Mr. Hodges said he realized something needed to be done to give families a place to remember the buried babies because he understood that no one ever forgot.

"A cemetery is a place for people to come and grieve after the fact," he said. "We had buried these infants but we had not fulfilled the more important function of a cemetery, which is to give people the opportunity to commemorate a life."

For too many decades, parents and siblings and other family members were denied the right to mourn, he said.

"It was 'no, you can't, no, you can't grieve. Just go on with your life,'" Mr. Hodges said.

"But no one ever forgot and now they have a place to remember."